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Designed to help the inner-city child become a more effective citizen, both educationally and socially, through the use of additional human and material resources and a realistic curriculum, the program involved raising and improving student self-image and performance.

The program concentrated in six major areas: a prekindergarten program, inservice teacher training, a health program, curriculum development, enrichment through the community-school program, and the development of instructional materials.

Teachers were paid partial tuition fees to take specific courses designed to upgrade instruction and develop an understanding of the needs of the urban child. Workshops were scheduled and funds provided for consultants; special conferences and visitations were arranged for staff attendance.

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BETTER TOMORROW FOR THE URBAN CHILD

(B. T. U.)

An Experimental Program for the Inner City Child
Operated by the Flint Board of Education with a
Grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

ORIGIN

Today's world demands quality and depth of learning for all persons. Believing that every child has the right to every opportunity for reaching his fullest potential as a citizen, the Flint Board of Education became concerned about the many problems relating to the educational attainment of children who attend "inner city" schools. In 1963, the Board requested and gratefully received a grant of $525,000 from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to plan and carry out a one-year experimental program.

This program was named Better Tomorrow for the Urban Child (BTU).

Flint educators found that many urban children entering kindergarten and year one have differences in their readiness for school. These differences were shown to be prevalent among 13 schools. Some children can progress normally; some will show exceptional ability; but others will need special help. The BTU Program is designed to improve basic preparation for school and continuous educational progress.

PURPOSE

This is a program designed to help inner city children become more effective citizens, both educationally and socially, through the use of additional human and material resources and a realistic curriculum. The program intent is to begin where

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children are and prepare them for successful school experiences, and later in the world of work.

GOALS

- To raise the level of school readiness
- To develop greater motivation for learning
- To improve the self-image and performance
- To prepare for successful academic performance
- To improve teaching through understanding
- To provide greater stability of staff in inner city schools
- To improve the total instructional program
- To recognize special strengths and positive contributions to the entire community
- To strengthen the community school philosophy through improved family, social, and civic life.

THE PROGRAM

Six major segments compose the BTU Program: pre-kindergarten, in-service training, health, curriculum development, enrichment through the community school program, and provision for instructional materials.

Pre-Kindergarten Experience: It is obvious that some children are more ready for school than others. In order to rectify this discrepancy, several schools offer a

preschool program taught by special teachers. Whenever possible, mothers are involved in order to reinforce at home the attitudes and objectives taught in the kindergarten. There can be no doubt regarding the importance of launching the very young child with maximum opportunity for success in school. In an age of concern for the dropout student and unemployed youth, it is also vital that every child begins school with as high a level of readiness as possible.

It is a well-known fact that most children who succeed at each grade level are motivated toward continued success in school. Their abilities to perform and compete improve their self-images and make them aware of their identities. They are eventually able to make more realistic judgments regarding their aspirations for higher learning and, ultimately, careers.

In-Service Education: Because of the necessity of meeting individual needs, additional teaching aids are made available to the BTU teaching staff. Although the BTU Program is not a departure from accepted techniques of teaching, it is concentrated teaching. Consequently, assistance and encouragement are offered to teachers and staff.

- Partial tuition is provided for teachers to encourage them to take specific courses designed to upgrade instruction and develop an understanding of the needs of the urban child.
- Workshops are scheduled and funds provided for consultants who will address their efforts to principals, community school directors, and teachers in special areas.
- Special conferences and visitations are arranged for staff attendance through the provision.

- Services of Consultants in the Instructional Services Department implement the effectiveness of the in-service program.

Health: Flint's comprehensive health program for school children is accelerated to provide increased medical and dental services through the C. S. Mott Foundation Children's Health Center. In addition, the Family Health Education as well as the Maternal and Infant Health departments of the Children's Health Center make their services more accessible to families of the BTU schools.

Curriculum Development: Four goals dominate the BTU curriculum development:

- To improve educational opportunities for all children
- To identify existing problems
- To work toward individualization of instruction
- To adhere to fundamental curriculum objectives. (Although teachers are advised to modify curriculum to meet the needs of the urban child, they also must keep in mind the average achievers and the academically talented.)

The basic curriculum includes language arts, social studies, mathematics, science and cultural subjects.

In language arts at the lower elementary level, children study teacher-prepared materials, relating to their own patterns of living.

In the field of social studies, teachers begin instruction with what is familiar to the children and then slowly lead them into other areas. A significant objective is to help them to develop an appreciation for their American heritage.

Modern mathematics, science and cultural subjects are taught in recognition of our technological age and shrinking world and the necessity to educate youth

for the challenging world of tomorrow.

Enrichment through the Community School Program: Flint's community schools have utilized their vast facilities and resources for even greater service to the inner city schools.

Special classes and services will be provided from the Mott Enrichment Program, including nutrition, arithmetic for fun, lecture-discussion, speech and drama, preschool classes, family living, arts and crafts, music and others.

SPECIAL STAFF

Teachers for the BTU Program will help each child achieve a worthy image of himself and will strive to provide emphasis upon life experiences.

The teachers also will teach at the point of need, and be willing to participate in many in-service programs for improving their teaching skills, for developing materials for children's needs, and for gaining a deeper understanding of child growth and development. Teachers will cooperate in the preservice education program to encourage and train student teachers for service in inner city schools.

Additional staff includes:

- 34 elementary teachers acting as specialists and homeroom teachers
- 8 helping teachers to assist the new and regular teachers
- 2 writers to prepare special materials
- remedial teachers in reading and arithmetic
- increased staff assistance to coordinate the program
- parent-education staff assistant

- diagnostic services
- clerical aides to assist in non-teaching duties

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

Visual aids have been increased and each school has a primary typewriter for preparing school readiness material. Additional materials for motivation are reading kits, varied levels of reading materials in the library stations, selected film strips, programmed and other individual student materials.

BUDGET

By means of the $525,000 grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Better Tomorrow for the Urban Child Program is made possible. The expenditures of this project are in addition to the expenditures by the Flint Board of Education from tax funds.

BTU PROGRAM PLANNING

The BTU is the result of cooperative efforts of all principals and staff in the Flint Community Schools.

Questionnaires were sent to principals, who in turn studied their needs with teachers. Not only were many services of the school system utilized but also renowned educators, sociologists, psychologists and anthropologists were invited to keynote workshops for the staff.

EVALUATION

Although many of the goals will be difficult to assess. because of mobility and variations in the home background as well as in teaching skills and changes in staff evaluative processes are being worked out and progress will be reported.

This is the kind of project that requires considerable time for results to become evident.